United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council demands immediate release of 43 UNOMIL observers and 6 non-governmental organization staff detained in Liberia; seeks return of all property seized.

+ International Conference on Population and Development adopts 20-year programme of action to stabilize world population growth and achieve sustainable development.

+ Secretary-General has audience with Emperor and Empress of Japan; Prime Minister Murayama announces contribution of team to aid Rwandan refugees in Zaire.

+ Secretary-General says Bosnian safe areas are not currently in sufficient danger to warrant use of NATO air power; Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serbs express interest in concept of demilitarized Sarajevo.

+ Nine political parties in Burundi sign agreement on presidential succession.

+ General Committee recommends that General Assembly include item on emergency assistance to Moldova in current agenda.

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The Security Council today strongly condemned the detention and mistreatment of 43 unarmed military observers of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) and six non-governmental organization staff. In a statement read out by President Juan Antonio Yañez-Barnuevo (Spain), the Council described that action as a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and the Cotonou Agreement. It demanded that those responsible immediately release the detained personnel and return all property seized.

The Council urged all parties to strictly observe the Cotonou Agreement and to ensure the safety and freedom of movement of all United Nations and humanitarian personnel. It asked the Economic Community of West African

(more)

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States (ECOWAS) to ensure that the Economic Community Military Observer Group (ECOMOG) continued to extend protection to the extent possible to UNOMIL personnel, in accordance with the exchange of letters last October by the Secretary-General and the ECOWAS Chairman defining the respective roles of the two missions in Liberia. The Council also called on the international community to assist ECOWAS with the necessary resources to enable ECOMOG to fulfil its mandate.

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The International Conference on Population and Development today adopted a 20-year programme of action for stabilizing world population growth and achieving sustainable development. The 16-chapter programme says that those aims are mutually reinforcing, and stresses the need to empower women and to guarantee choice in family planning.

The programme of action calls on all countries to ensure women's full involvement in policy-making so that they can achieve economic self-reliance, and to eliminate practices that discriminate against women. It underscores the need to promote gender equality in the family, and says that men should take more responsibility for their fertility and for parenting.

The programme says that if women are to realize their full potential, they must be guaranteed reproductive rights and must be able to manage their reproductive roles. They must have access to reliable information and quality health care services, including family planning. The text makes it clear that while Governments have a legitimate interest in population trends, coercion should not be used in family planning programmes.

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Continuing his visit to Japan, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today had an audience with Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo. He then met with Prime Minister Tomi-ichi Murayama and discussed a number of issues, including arms control and Japan's role in United Nations peace-keeping.

Prime Minister Murayama told the Secretary-General that Japan would play its part, albeit with some constitutional constraints, in the United Nations in the post-cold war period. Japan would send 470 military personnel and ten civilians to aid Rwandan refugees in Zaire. It would also give positive consideration to the question of assistance to the Palestinians, and look into the possibility of contributing to the trust fund for Mozambican political parties.

The Secretary-General later met with Foreign Minister Yohei Kono and discussed peace-keeping matters, including Japan's financial contributions to the Organization. He also attended the Boutros Boutros-Ghali Fellowship inaugural ceremony. Fellowships were awarded to five scholars from different regions of the world.

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There is not at this moment a sufficient threat to the populations of any of the safe areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina to warrant the use of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) air power, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. However, he told a press conference in Tokyo today that the fighting in the Bihac pocket should be contained, and that he and Special Representative Akashi would continue to monitor the situation closely.

The Secretary-General went on to say that the Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Serbs had expressed interest in the concept of a demilitarization of Sarajevo. The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) would explore that opening to see if it might lead to a stabilization of the situation there, which would be a significant step towards an overall political settlement.

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Nine political parties in Burundi -- including the Government and main opposition parties -- have signed an agreement on presidential succession, a United Nations spokesman announced today. He said that only three small parties had not signed the agreement, and that the situation in the country appeared to have stabilized somewhat.

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The General Committee today recommended that the General Assembly include an item on emergency assistance to the Republic of Moldova in its current agenda. The representative of Moldova told the Committee that the recent drought, hurricane and floods had caused $600 million worth of damage. Fifty persons had been killed and some 12,000 buildings had been destroyed.

The Committee recommended that the General Assembly ask all States and international organizations to help alleviate the economic and financial burden of the Moldovan people. The Assembly will consider the recommendation tomorrow morning.

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